



Performer Profile

Albert Gray Eagle – Exploring New Talents

Albert Gray Eagle, 51, an Army veteran from Oklahoma City, Okla., has been invited to attend the National Veterans Creative Arts Festival in St. Louis, Mo., this October. No stranger to this annual national event, Gray Eagle has performed in the program several times before. This year, though, he was invited for his award winning presentation in the multimedia category, a new artistic area for this multitalented performer.



In the past, Gray Eagle has performed musical selections on his hand carved wooden flute, an instrument to which he was introduced by his grandfather when he was just a child. He started playing at around age five when he was given one at a local fair, he says. According to Gray Eagle, who is a Native American, native people played the flute as far back as the 1700s, but when they were moved to reservations a century later, the flute playing stopped. He says that the music was so peaceful and relaxing that it was believed to have cast a sort of a spell on all people who listened.

Once an almost dying art, the music of the wooden flute became popular again by the 1950s, especially in Europe. These days, Gray Eagle and his brother, Matt, reach out to various groups to bring the music to them. They volunteer at the VA Medical Center and other hospitals in Oklahoma City, and also hold a summer event for children with cancer, where they make the flutes and teach the children to play them.

Gray Eagle enjoys seeing a “dead piece of wood” come to life, affirming his belief that nothing is useless, even when it is seemingly damaged – it just lives in a new way. He loves holding onto this special art form and teaching his 12-year-old nephew to play, noting that such special moments make a difference on earth.

"The arts provide a sense of hope for me and other veterans, so we can use our creative side in a positive way," said Gray Eagle. "I entered the National Veterans Creative Arts Festival because it is an opportunity to grow as an artist and be able to see and meet new friends. I love what I do, especially because it allows me to pass down traditions to young people. As a therapy, this Festival improves my social skills and keeps me motivated in the arts."

Albert Gray Eagle is attending the National Veterans Creative Arts Festival for the sixth time this year. His winning entry, played with Leland Parker, was an original composition of Parker's. Parker is the grandson of Quanah Parker, the last Chief of the Comanches. Their entry, "Shadow Chasing," won in the national drama competition in the multimedia video category. Both Gray Eagle and Parker will participate as part of the chorus in this year's stage production on October 28, 2007, taking place at Touhill Performing Arts Center at the University of Missouri – St. Louis.